

People's Reporter

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Christian Conference of Asia

15th General Assembly Christian Conference of Asia

28 September - 3 October 2023
Kottayam, Kerala, India



'God, Restore Us in Your Spirit And Renew the Creation'

The 15th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) was held at Kottayam, Kerala, India, from September 28 to October 3, 2023

The theme of the Assembly was 'God, Restore Us in Your Spirit And Renew the Creation'

The sub themes were 'Renewal and Restoration of Creation: Affirming the will of God' (Romans 15:5 & 6, Psalm 143:10), 'Renewal and Restoration of Creation: Dwelling in Harmony' (Isaiah 65:25), & 'Renewal and Restoration of Creation: Attaining Life in Its Fullness' (John 10:10). More than 500 persons from Asian countries and different parts of the world participated in the Assembly.



Inaugural Session: Lighting of the Lamp: Bishop Dhiloraj Canagasabay, Acting Moderator of the CCA, lights the lamp

L to R: Rev. Asir Ebenezer, General Secretary, NCCI, Rev. Dr. Abraham Mathew, Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza, Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary CCA, Dr. Jerry Pillay, Bishop Dhiloraj Canagasabay Acting Moderator, H. H. Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews III Catholicos, Augustine Karmagar, Dr. Theodosios Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Dr. Ruben Mark, Metropolitan Joseph Mar Gregorios, Bishop Dr. Abraham Mar Paulose, Metropolitan Cyril Mar Baselios.

Vision and Passion for Ecumenism

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara

"We need to recover our vision and passion for ecumenism, discerning in the depth of our faith."

Delivering the opening and welcoming address Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia said, "Due to the unfavourable COVID-19 crisis the Assembly was postponed twice and it has been 8 years now since the last Assembly was held in Jakarta in May 2015, and yet, by the grace of God, this assembly in Kottayam brought everyone together afresh."

Dr. Mathews George said, "The General Assemblies of the CCA, since its second Assembly, are considered radiant mosaics, composed of the diverse hues of Asian Christian traditions, the interwoven threads of ecclesial unity leading to common action for wider

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We express and exercise creation-care

Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay

"As God loves and cares for all creation, so must we express and exercise creation-care."

Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches delivered the keynote address on the theme of the Assembly, "God, Renew Us in Your Spirit, and Restore the Creation".

Dr. Jerry Pillay said, "We are living in difficult times. The world is in crisis. Today, the existential threat is global and it threatens the integrity of life on earth as we know it."

Dr. Jerry Pillay said, "The world is facing multiple shocks. Yet, the political establishments are marked by an inability or unwillingness to address these multidimensional and complex challenges. Only a holistic and transformative response to these crises, which will even overwhelm the political

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15th General Assembly
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People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

Voice For The 'Global South' Sans Action

From the end of the last century we have been listening to the rising voice in favour of the 'Global South' in international forums. Declarations by the G-7, G-20, BRICS, EU, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Quad, Indo-Pacific Economic Forum and such other international organisations dominated by rich countries, were voices raised in favour of the 'Global South'. However, the global economic system does not allow a fair, equitable and democratic distribution of the wealth and opportunities in the world.

It was with the formation of Group of 77 (G-77) countries at the first session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964, the developing countries sought promotion of their collective economic interests in a world order dominated by the US, Europe and the erstwhile Soviet Union. Now G-77 has been expanded by including 134 countries in Asia, Africa, South America, the Caribbean and the Pacific. After the setting up of a UN office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) by the UN General Assembly in 1974, the developing and the less developed countries referred to as the 'Global South' nursed the hope that there would be some change in the international economic order for a fair distribution of wealth of the world. The term 'Global South' was an inaccurate representation of the countries it was meant to represent. While India lies geographically in the Northern Hemisphere, (Australia and New Zealand lie in the 'Global North'), India belongs to the Southern Hemisphere. Therefore, in the 1980s, Economists developed the "Brand Line", a curve that more accurately divides the world into Economic North and South.

The US and the EU along with their economic and military power have been using the IMF and the World Bank to control and direct the global economic order to their advantage by impoverishing and disempowering the 'Global South'. From the beginning of this century, these countries appear to have started the game of making rhetoric in favour of the 'Global South' on the one hand, and taking efforts to organise new forums by adding Australia, Japan, South Korea and India within their fold, both to protect their economic interests and to organise a bloc similar to the NATO in the Asia Pacific. These efforts, purportedly to counter the influence of China in the Asia-Pacific, in effect are bound to work against the interests of the 'Global South'. Especially, the efforts to co-opt India to the fold of the developed countries would harm the interests of the 'Global South'. By the end of the last century, the power and the relevance of the NATO declined. However, the revival of the NATO after the war in Ukraine in 2022 to protect the interests of the Global North, is a source of another threat to the 'Global South'.

Under these circumstances, what is needed is concrete action to restructure the global economic order. Raising voice in favour of the 'Global South' in international forums without any concrete action remains merely as a rhetoric. Only when the institutional and economic arrangements facilitate a fair distribution of wealth and resources, the situation in the 'Global South' will change in favour of those countries. The rules of the games of international financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, are at the root of the global economic disparity and disorder. However, we find only voice in favour of the 'Global South' without any systematic deliberations and imaginative actions on this crucial issue.

Thought for the Fortnight

*Dreams become reality
once the dreamer
goes beyond imagining
and acts them out.*

— Richelle E. Goodrich



15th General Assembly Christian Conference of Asia

'God, Restore Us in Your Spirit And Renew the Creation'



We express and exercise creation-care

>>> *Contd. from Page 1 Col. 4*

and societal impediments, can give us respite from these existential challenges."

Rev. Dr. Pillay reflected on how churches and ecumenical movements are called to respond to these global challenges, especially the climate crisis. "The current ecological crisis is a major challenge for humanity," he said. "As God loves and cares for all creation, so must we express and exercise creation-care."

Dr. Pillay continued, "To be created in the image of God provides a great honour and a great responsibility. However, ideals of stewardship and dominion have often led to practices of dominion and devastation. Human beings have often regarded themselves as masters of the world, taming and domesticating it, doing as they please with its resources."

The image of God also entails social and ecological responsibilities, added Dr. Pillay. "While dominion has been interpreted as a divine grant to prey on the rest of nature without restraints, we regard dominion to mean the entire stewardship of nature," he said. "The appearance of creation is a glad act of embrace."

Dr. Pillay said, "Humans are the stewards of everything God has conferred on us. To be in the image of God is a vocation or calling, based on the biological fact that humans alone have evolved the peculiar capacity to represent, in modest caring ways, God's care for creation. We are called to be faithful stewards, but only so long as stewardship is understood as just and benevolent service on behalf of the interests of both human and non-human kind. God created not only the visible but



Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay

also the invisible. God is the sole source and providential benefactor of all being. While the kingdom is here and present in the world, yet it is still to come."

Faith is not a kind of make-believe utopianism, said Dr. Pillay. "Faith is protest against apparent inevitabilities and the restoration of creation. From what we have been saying thus far, it is apparent that humans have a role to play in the restoration of creation."

Vision and Passion for Ecumenism



Dr. Mathews George Chunakara

>>> *Contd. from Page 1 Col. 1*

ecumenism". This validates the Assembly as an occasion for assessing the visible manifestation of a life together with the Asian churches."

He said, "Earlier the CCA used to have 9 programs in 4 areas, whereas now it conducted 224 programs in 4 areas in which 9693 people from all over Asia attended."

Dr. Mathews George said, "Numerous emerging concerns need to be addressed in Asia as part of our Christian witness. Growing trends of religious intolerance, sectarian strife, persecution against religious minorities, ethnic and religious conflicts, etc., are some of the emerging concerns that need to be addressed as these problems are haunting people in different parts of Asia such as in Pakistan, Iran, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, West Papua, southern Thailand. Politicisation of religion and religionization of politics are major reasons for continued disharmony and religious intolerance in Asia".

Dr. Mathews George said, "We need to recover our vision and passion for ecumenism, discerning in the depth of our faith. We need to recognize that as members of the Asian ecumenical fraternity, we have to grow and progress in the quest for accepting the growing reality of our common belonging and our being in Christ. Let us keep travelling to reach the goal of our common witness in unity affirming its relevance."

People's Reporter

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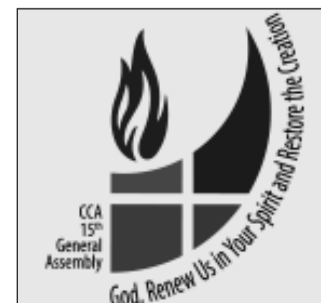
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Christian Conference of Asia

15th General Assembly Christian Conference of Asia

'God, Restore Us in Your Spirit And Renew the Creation'



Two Presentations on the Theme

Life not a Monopoly or Possession

Raj Bharat Patta



Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta delivers a thematic address

The thematic presentation by Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta commenced by asking a question to the audience "What is life?" He himself answered it by saying life in the human worldview is concerned only about humans and not about the other forms of life.

Life is not a possession or a mere monopoly but instead it is something that should be enjoyed by all forms of life on Earth. He explained the context of lifelessness by elaborating on the definition of the words 'anthropocene' and 'de-ecologisation', along with

stress on the importance of transforming life into its fullness by turning critically to plants and soil.

According to the anthropocene, humans are the centre of creation.

De-ecologisation takes place when we humans forget that there is a striking interdependence between all forms of life and if disrupted, it will cause the ecology to take a backseat. This happens usually because humans crown themselves to be the most dominant or powerful from the rest of God's creation and hence

Life is not a possession or a mere monopoly but instead it is something that should be enjoyed by all forms of life on Earth. De-ecologisation takes place when we humans forget that there is a striking interdependence among all forms of life and if disrupted, it will cause the ecology to take a backseat. This happens usually because humans crown themselves to be the most dominant or powerful, from the rest of God's creation and hence all the other disruptions occur. We tend to complain and put the blame on a certain group of people thinking they are the only ones creating the disruption but in the actual sense, each and every human being is responsible for what is happening to our biodiversity.

all the other disruptions occur. He also stated that we tend to complain and put the blame on a certain group of people thinking they are the only ones creating the disruption but in the actual sense, each and every human being is responsible for what is happening to our biodiversity.

We humans always need to revive in our mind three things.

The 1st one is 'un-creatureliness'. We humans forget that we are only a part of the creation of God. It is when we humans forget this, we begin to exploit and destroy every life form for our very existence, which will eventually take us to our dead-end.

The 2nd thing is 'Uncreation'. It is related to alienation which uproots life from the face of creation. Here the dominant ones declare and the vulnerable ones are left helpless.

The third thing is 'uncreativity'. It is the process of discontinuation of the flow of life where humans are on the side of receiving. It is more about self expression or more about ourselves rather than others, where our needs are limitless.

We have to return to the soil to enrich the fullness of life because soil is pivotal for the growth of life because "from dust we came and unto dust we return". Plants, animals and humans share the commonality of depending their life on soil.

We have to return to the call of the plants and to the birds to see the fullness of life.

We have to see the importance of birds. The Holy Spirit chose to come down in the form of a dove indicating the importance of birds in human life. Similarly is the case of

plants because these beings help provide balance in temperature and are agencies which provide us with a number of things.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta concluded his presentation by showcasing the audience with a Tamil song 'Enjoy Enjaami' which provided a beautiful illustration of the people of the soil and how important soil is for the sustenance of humans. "The earth bleeds because of our greed", quoted Rev. Dr. Patta. Hence, we need to take care that everything falls back into its place for the peaceful existence of all.

— Reported by Alisha Reji, a member of the General Assembly Media Team

Attaining Life In Its Fullness

Vicky Balabanski

[The Thematic presentation was on the topic 'Renewal and Restoration of Creation: Attaining Life in Its Fullness'. Rev. Dr. Vicky Balabanski is from Flinders University, Australia].

Creation is not just a place where life is revealed. It is actually the bridge for the believer to move from surface perception to depth perception, that is from unbelief to belief. In the Gospels, not only sight and hearing are important but senses such as touch, taste and smell are also important.

The picture of an abundant life is different for different people. For some, it will be a beautiful place with swaying palm trees and aquamarine water and for some it looks more like a

celebration or may be a fresh and untouched ecosystem with flowers and rich birdlife. In actual sense, Abundant Life is something that we all desire, people of faith and people of no faith, where there is peace and harmony and plenty, where our senses are filled with the good things that life can offer. It is also where people of faith and people of no faith are vulnerable.

God created life to be abundant. In the story of Genesis 2, the Garden of Eden is the Garden of "luxury, abundance, delight, lushness". The Garden of Eden is a perfect picture of abundant life.

Our desire for abundant life has become all about taking control of that abundance by

accumulating it for ourselves, our families, our communities and for our own nation.

Three ideas about the nature of Jesus's abundant life.

"First. The context of John 10 is the setting for this saying about abundant life."

"Second Our desire for abundant life has been hijacked and reshaped"

"Third A passage in John 20 invites further reflection."

The chapter John 10 is all about Jesus as a good shepherd whose priorities are the needs of the flock even to the extent of laying down his life. Through this chapter, we get to know about self-giving love which is now a lacking factor among people. "We too as followers of Christ need to

perceive abundant life from this perspective".

Human beings are always driven by their desires. We need to form habits and practices that shape our desires through worship and education.

Take Jesus to be a gardener, Jesus should also be considered as the teacher, the lord and also the gardener.

Rev. Dr. Vicky Balabanski showed a video stating the importance of protecting the natural resources and utilising them in a sustainable way. In relation with that she mentioned about 'Life Giving Agriculture' (LGA) by Rev. Han Keong Ho from South Korea and Rev. Dr. Daniel Premkumar from India.



Rev. Dr. Vicky Balabanski

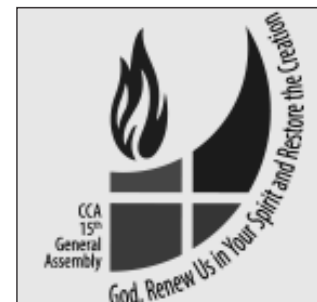
She concluded by explaining about the importance of Life Giving Agriculture. It is a kind of awareness to the farmers and people of the rural churches and society.

— Reported by Malavika M. Nair, a member of the General Assembly Media Team



15th General Assembly Christian Conference of Asia

'God, Restore Us in Your Spirit And Renew the Creation'



Blessed moments of the ecumenical journey at the 15th CCA General Assembly

Ecumenical colleagues from Asian countries and around the world met at Kottayam, the citadel of ancient Christian heritage in India, in connection with the 15th General Assembly Meet of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), held from 28th September to 3rd October 2023. The theme of the Conference was 'God, Restore Us in Your Spirit And Renew the Creation'.

The presence of 500 delegates was a firm confirmation that we continue to live up to our faith and trust in God's abundant mercies and assurances. It was also a demonstration of our individual and collective commitment to the ecumenical movement.

The Pre-Assembly Events were the Asian Ecumenical Institute, Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly, Asian

Ecumenical Youth Assembly, Stewards' Orientation, South Asia Sub-Regional Consultation on 'Ecumenical Diakona' towards attaining sustainable development goals, Asian Ecumenical Migrants Advocacy Network Forum on the Rights and Dignity of Asia Migrant workers in the Arabian Gulf.

The memories of the worship sessions will last for a lifetime, which were replete with ecumenical prayers, sharing of spiritual life and the exploration of the rich historical heritage of churches.

The General Sessions evoked much enthusiasm among the delegates. Keynote addresses, thematic presentations on the main Assembly theme and sub-

Philip Koshi

themes formed part of the deliberations.

The Business Sessions included presentations on policy matters, and reports. The Deliberative Sessions were very elaborate with the reviews of past programs of the CCA and presentation of future directions.

'Churcha' which means 'conversation', 'discussion' or 'sharing', in different Indian languages, which came under the Deliberative Sessions was a space for ecumenical dialogue on emerging and pressing theological, social and geopolitical concerns which will help shape the future work of the CCA's programs and projects.

The Asian Ecumenical

Festival, graced by the presence of the Honorable Chief Minister of Kerala, Shri Pinarayi Vijayan, was a celebrative gathering showcasing the rich cultural Asian traditions.

Asia Sunday was celebrated on October 1, 2023 during the Sunday Worship held at 55 different churches in and around Kottayam with different local congregations.

The Assembly Local Host Committee needs to be greatly commended for the excellent arrangements made in regard to food, accommodation and transportation, braving the heavy downpour. For a full week the 'sleepy' town of Kottayam awoke like Rip Van Winkle and received the delegates in the best Indian tradition of

hospitality. We are sure that the delegates will carry with them the blessed moments of this ecumenical journey at the 15th CCA General Assembly.



Professor Koshi served as Professor of English Literature at Mar Ivanios College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. Prof. Koshi is the author of five books, Ex-All India Radio Broadcaster, Quiz Master and Freelance Journalist. He is a member of the South Florida Mar Thoma Church and lives in Weston

Activism for Change

Daya Bhai

15th General Assembly meet in Kottayam, when asked about the measures to be taken to protect environment Daya Bhai responded that she didn't consider herself only as an environmentalist. She lives according to her vision. She encourages others to look at the whole picture. Everything is interconnected, all should be living healthy relating to one another. **Daya Bhai says that social hierarchy is the root cause for environmental and social issues.** People living in healthy harmony is of prime importance. **She is of the opinion that humans are driven by their greed and selfishness, and she motivates for a change in attitude. Humans as the residents of the earth should have other-oriented thinking and minimized craving to live a balanced life.**

When asked to comment on the greatest challenge faced by humanity, she said that, loss of respect for people and other things were the biggest challenge. She quoted Matthew 19:24 "I'll say it again. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!" Note that He says "a" needle, not "the" needle.

Daya Bhai recalled her experience at the Karshaka Samaram (**Farmers' Struggle**) when she came to know that in Kerala there was no agriculture but agribusiness. For her, 'agricultural' is of seven 'Fs', fiber, fuel, fodder, furniture, food and medicine, all part of flesh and fish. Corporate sector is the biggest enemy. They are deteriorating the soil by using Hybrid seeds, pesticides, fertilizer and 'feedicide'.

She recollected buying a piece of stony land 15 years ago, which is now home to many earthworm and creatures. And she proudly says that her land has the No. 1 soil without using any chemicals. **She calls attention to the existing educational crisis where there is only literacy. Education doesn't mean literacy, it is something much beyond that.**

Parents have a significant role in moulding the right values in childhood. Daya Bhai noted that we all have the right to coexist and everyone should be respected. **Everything in someway or the other is reusable.**

Daya Bhai emphasized that, "For me agriculture means enriching the mother earth".

— Reported by
Sundus Sali, Thushara Lily Manuel



Daya Bhai

Daya Bhai, a former Catholic nun, is an Indian social activist, working among the Tribals of Central India. She lives in Barul village of Chhindwara district in Madhya Pradesh.

Daya Bhai delivers inspirational speeches, holds satyagrahas and campaigns to press local authorities to open schools and empower neglected villages in the interior and tribal Madhya Pradesh. She was associated with *Narmada Bachao Andolan* and the *Chengara struggle*, apart from her solo struggles representing the forest dwellers and villagers in Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

Daya Bhai, who practices the theology of liberation, is settled down among the Gonds of Chhindwara district in Madhya Pradesh. She set up a school in the Barul village. Daya Bhai teaches each village she visits how to take care of itself and then moves on to the next village.

At the Christian Conference of Asia



Media Team — 15th CCA General Assembly Meet - Kottayam

From left : Krishna Shaji, Malavika M. Nair, Alisha Reji, Rev. Sister Wanti Hu Kynter, Dr. Paul Manalil, Prof. Philip Koshi, Silpa Ann Zachariah, Smriti Priyansha, Sundus Sali, Thushara Lily Manuel.

Contemporary Global Political Economy - 5

Build Communities that Share and Care

Varughese George

The 'Capital' needed a political and economic philosophy to pursue their interests and it resulted in the rediscovery of liberalism in the form of neo-liberalism. Liberalism was a philosophy emerged in the 18th century as a corollary to colonialism when the nascent capitalism urged the state to protect their interests in the merchandise voyages. It also wanted the parent state to enact labour laws within, and to negotiate with colonial administration for exports and imports of goods. They visualised the state to perform its duty in its minimal form, maintaining law and order. This was called a liberal state.

The 'Corporates' of the present and the last centuries also preferred to a minimal state controlling law and order, and protecting the boundaries. They were not pleased with the state's involvement in production and distribution. They pleaded that these responsibilities should be delegated to 'Private Capital'. They were greatly helped by the economists belonging to Chicago School of Economics that promoted the virtues of free market principles for the progress of society. This School passionately advocated the elimination of regulation on business. They had great trust in the efficacy of 'Market'. Their most ardent advocate was Milton Friedman, a Nobel laureate in Economics. This was called Neo-Liberal State.

This political and economic philosophy systemised by Chicago School was later espoused by President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher. But this was an exclusive State,

The lesson from Niyamagiri and Plachimada is that the big capital that is uprooting the lives of the poor can be resisted by the poor who have only labour as their Capital. The large multinational corporations have now assumed monopoly of the nature and they even shape the policies of the governments. The annual profits of some Transnational Corporations are larger than the GDP of many undeveloped countries together.

excluding the poor. Only those who have purchasing power, have a place in the market. Subsidies were to be cut or abolished. The world will be a one big Market. The rules of this new World Market have then to be re-written.

To frame the rules of this world market, a new structure called World Trade Organisation was built up. It made rules transcending national Parliaments. First, the rules are made in the WTO. The Parliaments shall ratify them. The Patent Amendment Act was framed by the WTO and Indian Parliament ratified it with a half-day discussion. The Patent Amendment Act that would affect one billion people in India, was ratified in such a swift manner elating the souls of Pharmaceutical Corporations! The WTO made separate treaties for intellectual property, agriculture, trade, services and manufacturing. In all these areas the corporates were the winners.

Now, these corporates have free access to the South for the export of their products. No restrictions can be placed on them since the WTO insists on a level playing field. But this onward march of Capital is not without resistance. From the French workers' struggle to the struggles of the Dongria Kondh tribals in Orissa, India, one familiar pattern is the inner strength of the struggle. Niyamagiri in Kalahandi and



Dr. Varughese George
is the National General Secretary
of Lok Tantrik Janata Dal

Rayagada districts of Orissa embrace rich pristine forests and this was leased to a mining company, Vedanta, to extract Bauxite. There was intense resistance from Dongria Kondh tribals and the Gram Sabhas (Village Assemblies) voted against the mining project. The Supreme Court of India upheld the decisions of the Gram Sabhas of the region and annulled the mining license. 'Down to Earth' wrote that, 'Niyamagiri case today serves as a 'textbook example' of good usage of free, prior-informed consent without which asymmetry of power between State and Indigenous Communities will continue'.

The power of the poor is immense, as Gustavo Gutierrez wrote. The poor, the wretched of the earth are 'calling into question first of all the

economic, the social and the political orders that oppress and marginalise them and of course the ideology that is brought in to justify them', he wrote. The slogan of Coco Cola a few decades back was that, 'I would like the world to buy a Coco Cola!' As part of its expansion to Asia they set up a plant in Plachimada in Palghat district in Kerala. When the water dried up in the wells surrounding Plachimada, the poor people of the area including the tribal population put up a long-drawn struggle and the Panchayat withdrew the license granted to the Coco Cola company leading to its shut down. That was the first time the Coco Cola Company was shut down anywhere after launching production.

So, the lesson from Niyamagiri and Plachimada is that the big capital that is uprooting the lives of the poor can be resisted by the poor who have only labour as their Capital. The large multinational corporations have now assumed monopoly of the nature and they even shape the policies of the governments. The annual profits of some Transnational Corporations are larger than the GDP of many undeveloped countries together. Kavaljit Singh wrote in, 'Global Corporate Power' that in the beginning of this century, of the total 100 economies of the world, 54 were of corporations and 46 of were

countries!

Then which is paramount? Nations or transnational corporations? Even the United Nations have lost its relevance. It is not even able to resolve Armenian - Azerbaijan territory dispute, not to speak about Russia-Ukraine war! All international institutions are headed by western elite. When the South pushed for a second term for the UN Secretary General Butros Butros Ghali from Ghana, the developed nations put strong resistance. The WTO is dominated by the developed nations. The old North South divide continues. There is no meaning in maintaining hope in international institutions! Since we are living in an unequal world system, any structure at global level will reflect the unequal order. It will only exacerbate the unequal relations. So let us build communities together, communities share and care.

The Corporations would not like this Communitarian Concept. They would prefer a Centralised World System where the market holds the key. In a world system according to Immanuel Wallerstein there is an outer circle and an inner circle. The inner circle is Europe and the US. The outer circle is the Third World. The inner circle prospers through extracting resources from the outer circle, Asia Africa and Latin America. The corporations perform this task. Whenever there is a disruption to it, militaristic solutions are invoked.

To be continued



NIFEA Communique

Commit to Achieve

An Inclusive, Gender-Just, Equitable Global Order

The NIFEA (New International, Financial, Economic Architecture) is a collaborative ecumenical effort of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, Methodist World Council and Council for World Mission. Members of Communities including social thinkers, clergy, theologians, activists and community leaders representing social organizations, ecumenical institutions and religions gathered under

the aegis of the NIFEA at a time when G-20 Summit was held in Delhi, India, on 9 and 10 September 2023. The NIFEA Gathering brought out a Communique. Continuation of the communique published on page 5 of the last issue of the People's Reporter is given below.

We understand

The historic emergence of the G7 and its expansion due to the global economic meltdown in 2008, as well as recognizing the changing global economic landscape, though appearing to

be a benevolent, is tantamount to ensuring market expansion and unbridled access to the natural resources especially in the Global South.

The decision-making bodies such as the United Nations Organization are ostracized and made redundant. It dictates terms to the marginal countries in the name of bringing efficiency by pushing the privatization regime irrespective of existing financial bodies.

The bailout bills are already being forged to weaken the existing financial regulatory institutions. Criminalization of dissent and hounding of the

people's organizations have continued unabated. The Indian presidency is more about political and electoral victory rather than conversations on inflation, debt, and wealth inequality. The members of the G20 are complicit in such regimes. The process of raising voices will be risky but is riskier if one doesn't.

The calculated erosion of the judicial machinery and the selective suspension of the juridical procedures bear semblances to an undeclared dictatorial regime bent upon making the judicial systems irrelevant. The democratization of justice systems is to be evolved

where microprocesses of justice systems are to be nurtured within people's movements. A disproportionate number of Indigenous people reel under the masked financial regimes subsumed within the unorganized labour arenas. The consistent demonisation of the public interest litigation mechanisms and the disproportionate elevation of judges belonging to dominant castes need immediate addressing.

To be continued

The Goodness of the Creation - 12

Church's Response to Climate Change

Mathew Koshy Punnackadu

The Bible urges us to "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation". How will we proclaim the good news to the whole creation when there is no water to drink? Climate Change is going to affect all the creations of God. A scorching heat wave in India killed over 1,500 people in 2015 as temperatures soared above 47°C.

According to the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the global sea level is rising at an alarming rate and is projected to be even greater in this century. When global temperature rises, ice melts at the poles of the earth. Also, sea-water expands and occupies more space. Coastal communities, in every country, are threatened by floods and storm surges, to which small islands are the most exposed.

India lost about 235 square kilometres to coastal erosion owing to climate change-induced sea-level rise, land erosion and natural disasters such as tropical cyclones between 1990-2016. About 3.6 million people out of 170 million people living in coastal areas were displaced between 2008-2018. Recent figures are more alarming, with 3.9 million displaced in 2020 alone, primarily owing to Cyclone Amphan. India's Deccan Plateau has seen eight out of the 17 severe droughts since 1876. What is the role of the Church when the creations of God are suffering? What is the Christian response?

The Church should be committed to protecting the integrity of the creation and respond prophetically or lament like Jeremiah when people exploit natural resources and consequently crucify God's creation, the flora and the fauna. The Church must express solidarity with our groaning creation, eagerly awaiting redemption. God, the Creator, designed the universe as interdependent and as a living organism. Therefore, her redemption is possible only by preserving her dynamic and harmonious balance.

The present development paradigm promoted by the 'developed' countries is responsible for the global ecological crisis, thus 'Climate Injustice'. The 'developed' countries must change their present development paradigm, which exploits fossil fuels, resulting in Climate change. In global climate negotiations, the Church should express its concerns. The Church has to think globally and act locally. Even though Climate change is a worldwide phenomenon, Churches can

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build up climate-resilient communities locally.

Energy conservation is one of the issues which needs the attention of the Church. When there is enough Sunlight, why do Churches use Electric lamps during the daytime? The Church can ask the members of the Church to use, Solar energy, Biogas, LED light systems in their houses. Out of 24 Diocesan headquarters of the Church of South India (CSI), almost all generate Solar Energy from their rooftops. St James's Piccadilly is one of England's first Eco Churches. By regularly auditing their energy usage, they have identified ways of reducing and offsetting emissions. Solar panels installed on the Church roof generate 3,500 kWh of renewable electricity each year, and they pay to offset their non-renewable gas usage through the Woodland Carbon Code and Forest Carbon Programmes.

Water Conservation is a serious issue. The Church can encourage people to harvest rainwater from the rooftops of all the buildings wherever possible. Vetiver, a plant of Indian origin, having very long roots can enhance groundwater recharge and avoid soil erosion. Fifteen countries are using it for various purposes. Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) is an initiative of the Christian Churches and organisations to promote the preservation, responsible management, and equitable water distribution for all. EWN facilitates information exchanges, providing resources for churches, Christian organisations and others about the global water crisis and community-based solutions and initiatives. The Secretariat of the EWN is located at the Headquarters of the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

The Church can intervene in reducing the use of throw-away plastics, a severe pollutant in air, water and land. Avoid throw-away polythene bags and other plastic materials completely during the day-to-day activities of the Church. Use steel tumblers and steel plates for Church functions. Serve food on banana leaves or Oil papers over the steel plates, which will



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reduce the use of water and soap while cleaning it. Encourage people to carry paper or cloth bags while buying provisions from a shop or supermarket.

The Church has to take a strong stand against deforestation and encourage afforestation. After or during the wedding service, the newly wedded couple shall be encouraged to plant a sapling together. I have seen the couples planting saplings in the CSI, immediately after the wedding service (Madhya Kerala Diocese) and during the Wedding Service in the CSI Nandyal Diocese, both in the presence of CSI Synod Office Bearers. The Saplings could also be planted in memory of a deceased member. Encourage planting fruit-bearing plants in public places, which other creatures of that area can use. The Church's slogan should be "Plant fruit-bearing plants outside your boundaries and nurture them", highlighting the Church's spirituality of caring for all. Christ Church Toxteth Park (UK) is taking efforts to preserve and protect the natural environment around them. They have started calculating their carbon footprint each year and looking at ways to offset their emissions through carbon reduction policies. In 2019, they planted trees in the Northwest of England through the Tree Appeal. They have also encouraged the congregation to calculate their carbon footprint and think about

ways to reduce or mitigate their impact on the planet.

For construction, use materials which are made sustainably. Use locally made goods wherever possible. Also, consider the life time costs of materials while repairing, altering or rebuilding premises. Construct Churches with the right motive to worship God and not to show its members' glory. The size of the Church should be proportional to the average Sunday worshippers. It will help to avoid the depletion of natural resources as far as possible. Construct simple, environment-friendly churches to accommodate the maximum expected number of people. Use minimum quantity of non-renewable resources. Sharing of Church buildings with other denominations is a good example for the sake of ecumenism and ecology since that promotes effective and efficient utilisation of resources. **There is a Church in Thoothukudy, Tamil Nadu, India, where the CSI and the Catholic Church share the same building. A joint committee of the CSI and the Catholic Church members decide the timing of each service and other activities. More than 10 Churches are using the same building for Services in Kuwait.**

Organic waste, when it decays, generates Methane gas responsible for global warming. Church should train its members in Waste Management i.e. Reduce waste, Reuse waste by composting and Refuse waste coming from corporate lobbies. Do not burn plastic materials, which produce carcinogenic dioxin, which can cause cancer and other serious health problems. Instead of giving plastic water bottles to individuals, plan to serve water in glasses. Degradable and non-degradable materials must be treated separately. Bishop Heber College, Trichy, Tamil Nadu, has a plant to convert used paper materials to other valuable materials. CSI Engineering College, Ooty, Tamil Nadu, has a plant to convert all the food waste into fertilisers.

Pope Francis has been a vocal advocate for

environmental stewardship. He published an encyclical letter in 2015 called "Laudato Si'," which addresses environmental issues and the relationship between faith and ecology. Episcopal Church (USA) has actively addressed environmental problems by creating care- initiatives. Many Episcopal dioceses and congregations have adopted eco-friendly practices and advocated for environmental justice. The Lutheran World Federation promotes ecological sustainability and climate justice within the Lutheran community. United Church of Christ (UCC) has a strong history of engagement in environmental and social justice issues. Many UCC congregations have embraced eco-theology and ecological activism. The Church of Sweden has been in the forefront of eco-theological discussions and environmental initiatives. It has set ambitious sustainability goals and promotes eco-friendly practices. Eco-Congregation Scotland is a movement of Scottish Church congregations committed to addressing environmental issues through their life and mission. **The CSI has a department for environmental work coordinating the ecological work of 24 dioceses and is the first Church in India to implement a Green Protocol for the life and ministry of the Church.**

Besides the UN, the World Council of Churches advocates for the sustainable use of natural resources, resulting in environmental issues. They are encouraging member churches to become more eco-friendly. Anglican Communion Environmental Network (ACEN) is working to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth.

The Anglican Episcopal family comprises tens of millions of Christians who are members of 46 different Churches in more than 165 countries around the globe. In many parts of the world, local Anglican Churches have given leadership in advocating for responsible environmental stewardship, providing support and leadership to local initiatives to protect the environment, and seeking to educate Anglicans as individuals and as communities to become better stewards of creation. The Most Reverend Julio Murray Thompson, Primate & Bishop in Panama, is the Chairperson and the Reverend Canon Rachel Mash, Anglican Church of Southern Africa, is the secretary of the ACEN Steering Committee. This article's writer is one of the 11 members of the Steering Committee of the ACEN.

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Mammen Varkey

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."He said to him the third time "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, "Follow me." John 21: 15-19.

In our following of our Master Jesus, we have to ask ourselves the question, 'How and where do we see our Master and Lord'? In palaces, on the throne, with the powerful, the successful....? Or with the starving, the poor, the 'fishers', the defeated....?. These questions are critically, decisively important in our faith journey. The answers that we discover and embrace will determine the nature of our faith journey and whether we are truly following our Master who revealed himself to his

disciples on the Tiberian Seashore as an ordinary human being, with no special physical features and as a hungry Master too.

A deep reflection on the call of the Risen Master to Peter, on the Tiberian Seashore, is unavoidable, for our faith journey. And the discoveries that we make will decide whether we are truly following the Risen Master revealed to us by John, the author of the Fourth Gospel.

We are reflecting on two affirmations by John.

1. The call of the Risen Master to Peter: "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, "Feed my lambs." John 21:16. That question and the call were repeated three times. The call is nothing but "Feed my lambs". Perhaps, it must have been a surprise and even a matter of shock to them. None of the disciples, even Peter, would have expected that call ! John himself writes what Nathaniel had told Jesus. "Nathaniel answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" John 1:49 (RSV). So the disciples were following the one who would one day become the 'King of Israel'. About the commissioning of the disciples, Luke writes, "And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal."

Luke 9:1 & 2 (RSV). What were they presented with? Power and authority! For what were they sent out? To preach the Kingdom of God! Now no mention of Kingdom! Now the Risen Master asks his beloved disciple who had gone for 'fishing' to "Feed my lambs". It was a great call to re-understand the mission of the 'kingdom of God'. It was a clear inescapable call to reject 'kingdom' understanding of the mission that is entrusted to us. It was a call to go in search of the starving, the insecure lambs. And to understand radically differently the mission entrusted to his disciples by the Risen Master.

2 . How are the calls to "follow me" and to "feed my sheep" to be obeyed?

After giving the call to Peter to 'feed my sheep', John writes, Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would: but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you

and carry you where you do not wish to go." (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God). And after this, he said to him, "Follow me." John 21:18, 19. So the way of fulfilling the calls 'feed my sheep' and 'follow me', have to be re- discovered, to be understood radically differently.

We are called to 'follow' a 'hungry' Risen Christ. In spite of his hunger, he feeds the hungry. The Risen Master used some of the fish caught by his disciples and fed the hungry disciples! John 21: 9-12. The profound message of this has to be embraced in our faith journey. The calls to "follow me" and "to feed my sheep" were not from the one who was on the throne but from a 'Hungry Master' and from a 'Shepherd' went in search of the 'sheep' who had been called 'to be fishers of men' but went for 'fishing of fish'. At this time in our following of our 'Master' and 'Lord', in our faith journey, we also have to embrace this vital truth that the Risen Christ inescapably revealed to us.

LAMP UNTO THE FEET, LIGHT UNTO THE PATH

Not By Sight, But By Faith

A. V. Itty

2 Cor. 5: 1-8

This is the witness of a sister about the deliverance she got after five surgeries and eight years of sufferings. Doctors said: She will have to live bed-ridden all her life. She reached a situation where she had to take in very strong medicines, pain killers, and sedatives. Her troubles were doubled by the words of experienced physicians that there was "no hope".

Then she happened to read the book: *You Can Transform Your Future* by John Autin.

"Get rid of your thinking that you are destined for disease, suffering, and failure; get up from your bed, and expand your frontiers. Put an end to your sorrows and sufferings through the act of faith": She trusted these words in the book. She lost her despair. Her heart was filled with faith. Her heart became controlled by the word of God and the Spirit of God!

Thus began her deliverance. One day, to the surprise of her doctor, she got up and walked!

Just as the seeds grow into plants of the same variety, the thinking within our minds shapes our mentalities and personalities. If we sow in our minds the seeds of hope and deliverance, the same will germinate and grow. These are the weapons capable to



bring down the fortresses of diseases and despair! The hand of the Deliverer will work miracles in our lives. Miracles are possible even today!

Just as it is said in the passage that we meditate upon, we should live by faith, not by sight. If we live by faith,



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experiences surpassing sight will happen in our lives! My own humble life experiences authenticate this. Halleluiah!

May God help us to live by faith

Food For Thought:

Life and Death are before us; reject Death and choose Life.



The FINE NUANCES of FINANCE are NUISANCE to all NOVICES

Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly

"Journeying Toward the Renewal and Restoration of God's Creation"



From left to right: Dr. Jaisy Karingattil, Arceli Bile (Philippines, CCA Staff), Rev. Dr. Aye Nive (Myanmar), Dayabhai (Social Activist), Hennette Hutabarat Lebang (Indonesia - WCC Asia President), Supaporn Yarnasarn (Thailand - CCA Executive Committee Member), Rev. Jyoti Singh (NCCI Executive Secretary for Women)

Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly was held at the Chaithanya Pastoral Centre in Kottayam, from September 26 to 28 with the theme, "Asian Ecumenical Women: Journeying Toward the Renewal and Restoration of God's Creation".

The event brought together women from diverse backgrounds, inspiring unity and purpose. The Assembly was an enlightening experience, thanks to the contributions of esteemed resource persons who shared their knowledge and insights:

WCC Asia President Hennette Hutabarat Lebang delivered a powerful keynote address on women and climate change, resonating deeply with attendees. Derlene Marques Caramanzana (GBCM Asia Pacific Region) presented a paper on Climate and Gender Justice, setting the foundation for meaningful discussions. Rev. Jyoti Singh, NCCI, presented a paper addressing the challenges faced by women and girls in India in the face of climate emergencies.

Rev. Dr. Awe Nye (Myanmar Baptist Convention) and Dr. Vedakani Vedanayakam (Church of South India) nurtured spiritual growth through profound Bible studies.

Social activist Dayabhai left an indelible mark with her powerful drama highlighting the Endosulfan issues in Kerala, drawing attention to crucial social and environmental matters.

— Reported by Jaisy Karingattil

Book Release

'Earth Is The Lord's'



EARTH IS THE LORD'S: Biblical Reflections on Sustainable Agriculture, authored by Rev. Dr. R. Daniel Premkumar, member of the LGA Asia, was introduced by Rev. Dr. Asir Ebenezer, General Secretary of the NCCI. It was released by the Moderator of the CCA Rt. Rev. Dhiloraj Canagasabay during the General Assembly held at Kottayam. The first copy was presented to Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary, CCA.

Asian Ecumenical Institute



Dr. Yakoob Mar Irenios & the participants in Asian Ecumenical Institute conducted at Kottayam in connection with the CCA General Assembly.

CHEER CHAT

'Alone, we can do so little.
Together, we can do SO MUCH!'

— Helen Keller



Christian Conference of Asia

15th General Assembly Christian Conference of Asia

'God, Restore Us in Your Spirit And Renew the Creation'



Asian Ecumenical Festival



Kerala Chief Minister Mr. Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurates the Asian Ecumenical Festival held, as part of the CCA Assembly, at Mammen Mappillai Hall at Kottayam on 30th September 2023.



CCA: 15th General Assembly: Organizing Committee

'Churcha' (Deliberations) on Economy, Ecology and Oikoumene in the Asian Context



L to R: Rev. Eleuterio J. Revollido, Rev. Prof. Dr. Dietrich Werner, Dr. M.A. Oommen, Dr. Mathews George Chunakara

This 'Churcha', as part of the CCA Assembly, was held at the CMS College, Kottayam at 3 pm on 1st October 2023

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